

## 12/08/2008 This Week In Congress

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December 8, 2008

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I will be traveling to Washington, D.C. this week if Congress reconvenes to consider an automaker's bailout plan. I hope you find this newsletter useful.

From Washington to Home: Beginning My 13th Annual Listening Tour

Each year since coming to Congress, I conduct a listening tour, visiting communities in each of the 69 counties of the First Congressional District to learn about issues important to Kansans. I will begin my annual Big First Listening Tour next week. This year's tour is themed, "From Washington to Home." The first stop will be in Washington, in Washington County with the final stop in Home, in Marshall County.

My first two stops will both be on Monday, December 15, 2008. [Click here](#) to view the times and locations and to see the other stops that have been scheduled. The remainder will be determined based upon the 2009 voting schedule for Congress. Check my Web site to stay up-to-date on the tour schedule.

Each year I look forward to the opportunity to visit communities and hear from Kansans. The issues I focus on and the work I do in Washington, D.C., are based on what I learn from these conversations.

## Kansas State University is Home for National Bio- and Agro-Defense Laboratory

This week, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced that it has selected Kansas State University (KSU) as the site location for the National Bio- and Agro-Defense Laboratory (NBAF). On Thursday, I joined KSU President Jon Wefeld and other state leaders at a press conference at KSU to formally announce this good news that will create benefits for the state of Kansas. [Click here to read more about the press conference.](#) [Click here to listen to my comments about the site selection.](#)

Studies conducted at the \$451 million federal bioscience laboratory will research ways to protect citizens and animals from the threat of disease. Research discovered will assist the U.S. agriculture industry by improving response time in the event of a disease outbreak. The state-of-the-art, highly-secure laboratory will house scientists from DHS, the Department of Agriculture and Health and Human Services. The facility will also create hundreds of new jobs for the Kansas economy.

Over the past three years, Kansas leaders demonstrated great initiative to bring NBAF to Manhattan, and as a member of the NBAF Task Force, I am proud to have been a part.

## Food Drive Will Help The Hungry in Kansas

Across Kansas and in all parts of the country, food banks are facing a challenge. More families are in need of food but donations to local food banks are not keeping up with demand. The Kansas Foodbank Warehouse in Wichita, which distributes food to more than 400 agencies in 86 Kansas counties, has seen demand increase by around 27 percent during the last year. At the same time, monetary donations to the food bank are down.

As co-chair of the U.S. House of Representatives Hunger Caucus, I am working to raise awareness about hunger in our communities and the needs of food banks. My offices in Hays, Hutchinson and Salina have partnered with local food banks to collect non-perishable food items through Friday, December 19. During the Christmas season, I encourage those who are able to consider others in need and give what they can to help the hungry. If you live in the Hays, Hutchinson or Salina areas, you may drop off your donation at my office. Kansans in other parts of the state may donate to a food bank near them.

#### Visiting about Cattle Industry

Cargill Meat Solutions Corporation: I visited with company leaders from Cargill Meat Solutions Corporation in Wichita on Tuesday. Cargill Meat Solutions is a leading processor and distributor of various types of meat. The company distributes to Kansas and other consumers around the globe. During the meeting, we discussed issues in the cattle industry that may be affected with the change of the presidential administration, grain prices and who may be appointed as the new U.S. Secretary of Agriculture.

Thanks to the president of Cargill, John Keating; the vice president of Cattle Procurement, Ken Bull; and Director of Federal Government Relations for Cargill, Jon Hixson. Also thanks to the senior managers of the Cargill Beef Management team who participated in the meeting.

Kansas Livestock Association's 96th Annual Convention: I spent time Friday morning visiting with cattle producers from across the state at the Kansas Livestock Association's (KLA) annual meeting in Wichita. KLA is the state's largest trade organization for cattle producers. It was good to see many familiar faces at the annual convention and be able to discuss current issues affecting the beef industry, including domestic marketing opportunities, cost of production, transportation challenges, international trade, animal husbandry practices and proposed environmental regulations.

Thanks to KLA President Tracy Brunner for the invitation to attend and former U.S. Representative Charlie Stenholm for speaking.

Touring Machine Laboratory, LLC in Lenexa

On Monday, I toured Machine Laboratory, LLC in Lenexa. The company was established in 1959 as a computerized numerical control Swiss screw machine company. It is owned by Tech Investment, an investment firm based out of Kansas City. Tech Investment also owns CT Systems which specializes in producing mechanical and electrical parts for the aerospace, defense, and transportation industries. CT Systems is headquartered out of Lenexa and has plants in Cottonwood Falls, Fredonia, and St. Louis.

On the tour I learned that Machine Laboratory produces high precision parts of prototype and production machinery for automotive, electronic and medical industries. The company has recently been awarded military defense projects to make small arms ammunitions. Thanks to Bruce Breckenridge for inviting me on the tour.

Meeting with Community Leaders in Overland Park

After learning about the work Machine Laboratory, LLC, does for our military, I attended the Overland Park Rotary Club meeting. As a member of the Hays Rotary Club, I enjoy visiting other clubs across the state to learn about issues important to that community. Civic clubs, such as Rotary, provide valuable leadership in helping make the places we call home better. Thanks to Dick Bond and Club President Jeff Goodman for their hospitality.

#### Visiting Wichita's Vet Center, Awaiting New Mobile Counseling Van

I visited the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Vet Center in Wichita on Tuesday. Wichita's Vet Center plays a vital role of providing readjustment counseling services to combat veterans and their families.

The VA recently selected Wichita for one of its new mobile counseling centers. This 38-foot motor coach will bring mental health services closer to rural and underserved Kansan veterans across the state who otherwise may not have access to this important care. The mobile counseling center is expected to arrive soon.

I appreciate the time I spent with the Wichita Vet Center's dedicated staff, including team leader, James Gibson; counselors Lori Wiersma, Michael Felt and Gary Maloney; Global War on Terrorism outreach coordinator, Paul Miller; and office manager, Maria Delgado.

## Attending University of Kansas Basketball Game

On Saturday afternoon, I had the opportunity to attend the University of Kansas basketball game versus Jackson State. While on the KU campus for the game, I had a chance to visit with Chancellor Robert Hemenway. Before the game I met Jordan Juenemann and his mother who are from Hays. Jordan is in his first year playing for the KU basketball team. [Click here for a photo to see a photo of me and Jordan.](#)

Thanks to Chancellor Hemenway, his wife Leah Hemenway and head basketball coach Bill Self for their hospitality.

## In the Office

Andy Allison of Topeka and Dr. Barb Langner of Shawnee were in with the Kansas Health Policy Authority to discuss the state Medicaid budget. Maggie Nelson of Kansas City was in with Cerner to talk about the importance of health information technology and how it can be used to lower health care costs.

Very truly yours,

Jerry